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The
Captain Michael Pierce
Fight

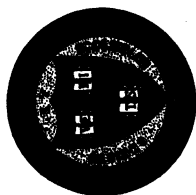
March 26, 1676

Harvard College
Library

from Edward D. Pearce
Class of 1871.
descendant of
"Michael Pierce"

June 18 1908

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Harvard College Library

FROM

Edward D. Pearce,

Providence.





HON. EDWIN C. PIERCE

ADDRESSES AND POEM

IN COMMEMORATION OF

The Captain Michael Pierce Fight

MARCH 26, 1676

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori

MEMORIAL SERVICES

AT CENTRAL FALLS, RHODE ISLAND

OCTOBER 15, 1904

DEDICATION OF MONUMENT

SEPTEMBER 21, 1907

THOMAS W. BICKNELL

Editor

1908

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PROVIDENCE
EDWARD D. PIERCE
PROVIDENCE

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Foreword

BY THOMAS W. BICKNELL.

On the 20th of June, 1904, the Bristol County Historical Society celebrated the Two Hundred and Twenty-ninth Anniversary of the opening of King Philip's War, in the Baptist Church, at Barneysville, Swansea. As President of that society I made an address giving an account of the origin of Philip's War and the story of the first assault on the people and Church of Swansea. The large audience in attendance and the great interest manifested in the details of the great tragedy of 1675, led me to believe that the leading events of that early struggle of the Colonists with the savages should be properly commemorated by exercises and monuments and I selected the Michael Pierce Fight on the Blackstone River as the first event to be noted. Accordingly a program was prepared and exercises were held at the Congregational Church, Central Falls, R. I., near the scene of the Pierce tragedy. Hon. Edwin C. Pierce of Providence, a descendant of Michael Pierce of Scituate, was invited to deliver the principal address and Hezekiah Butterworth accepted an invitation to read a poem.

The following program was successfully carried out before an interested audience many of whom were descendants of the participants in the fight and of victims of the massacre.

THE CELEBRATION
OF THE
228th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
CAPTAIN MICHAEL PIERCE FIGHT
WITH CANONCHET,
Chief of the Narragansetts,
AT
PAWTUCKET FALLS, R. I.
March 26, 1676.
PUBLIC EXERCISES
AT
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
High Street, Central Falls, R. I.

Exercises

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, AT 2.30 P. M.

THE CHAIRMAN, HON. THOMAS W. BICKNELL,
President of The Bristol County Historical Society, will
take the chair at 2.30 o'clock in the afternoon.

THE OLD HUNDRETH PSALM,
will be sung by the congregation.

THE DIVINE BLESSING,
will be invoked by Rev. J. H. Lyon, D. D., Pastor of the
Congregational Church, Central Falls.

HON. ALBERT H. HUMES, AND HON. JAMES H. HIGGINS,
Mayors of Central Falls and Pawtucket will give Ad-
dresses.

EDWIN C. PIERCE, ESQ.,
of Cranston, R. I., a lineal descendant of Capt. Michael
Pierce of Scituate, Mass., will deliver an oration on *Pierce's*
Fight.

HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH,
of Boston, Mass., will read an original poem.

THE TOWNS OF SCITUATE, MARSHFIELD, DUXBURY,
SANDWICH, BARNSTABLE, EASTHAM, AND
YARMOUTH, MASS., whose sons were slaughtered in
the Indian Massacre, have been invited to send representa-
tives to the celebration, and short addresses may be ex-
pected from those present.

THE NATIONAL HYMN, "AMERICA,"
will be sung by the congregation.

Memorial Services

The services in commemoration of the Captain Michael Pierce Fight were held in the Congregational Church, at Central Falls, not far from the fateful battlefield. A large audience, made up in part of descendants of Captain Michael Pierce and his gallant Company was in attendance, and in addition to the addresses published, appropriate words of welcome were spoken by Mayor Humes of Central Falls, and Mayor Higgins of Pawtucket. After prayer by Rev. Dr. Lyon and singing, the addresses of the program and the poem were thoroughly appreciated by the audience. On motion, the chairman was authorized to name a committee to make plans for a monument to be erected at some future day, and the following persons were appointed: Col. Alonzo E. Pierce, Frederick P. Pearce, Addison P. Munroe, Amasa M. Eaton, Edward E. Pierce M. D., E. C. Pierce, Thomas W. Bicknell and John H. Pierce. At the close of the exercises at the church, a visit was made to the battlefield of the historic fight near the Blackstone River, a few rods north of the N. Y. & N. H. R. R. bridge.

The committee on a suitable monument to commemorate the Michael Pierce Fight organized by the choice of Hon. E. C. Pierce as chairman and Hon. Thomas W. Bicknell as secretary.

It was voted to raise funds for a monument and also to publish the addresses and poems delivered at Central Falls.

After several meetings of the committee at which various plans were discussed, it was finally voted to make Mr. John H. Pierce, Addison P. Munroe and Thomas W. Bicknell a committee to raise money and to secure if possible a white quartz boulder for a monument. By the efforts of Mr. J. H. Pierce a suitable boulder was found on the farm of Hon. Arthur Perry Brayton of Fall River, which was donated by that gentleman. The expense of its removal to Central Falls and of setting and fitting for the bronze tablet was paid from the funds, amounting to about fifty dollars, collected and paid out by Mr. Pierce. The bronze tablet was contributed by the Committee on Historical Sites from the fund of \$1,500, set apart for marking historic spots by the State of Rhode Island.

The quartz boulder is about five feet high, four feet wide and

three feet thick, and weighs about five tons. The bronze tablet was cast by the Gorham Company, Providence, R. I., and is perfectly fitted and fastened to the boulder, which faces west on a lot at the corner of High street and Aigan street, Central Falls, about five hundred feet from the west bank of the Blackstone River. The right to the location rests in the State and was conveyed by the Harris Steam Engine Company, through its treasurer,
Esq., of Providence, R. I.

The inscription is as follows:

“PIERCE’S FIGHT”
HERE CAPTAIN MICHAEL PIERCE
AND HIS COMPANY OF
PLYMOUTH COLONISTS
AMBUSHED AND OUTNUMBERED
WERE ALMOST ANNIHILATED
BY THE INDIANS
MARCH 26, 1676

The following program was issued at the dedication:

Dedicatory Exercises at
Central Falls, R. I.,
Saturday, September 21, 1907, at 2.30 P. M.,
in connection with the marking of
the Site of Pierce’s Fight.
Introductory Address by WILFRED H. MUNRO,
President of the Rhode Island Historical Society.
Address by Rev. JAMES H. LYON of Central Falls.
Historical Address by EDWIN C. PIERCE, Esq., of
Providence,

At the dedicatory services at the monument on Saturday, September 21, there was a good attendance of citizens of Central Falls, with about twenty descendants of the men who fell in the fight and more than thirty members of the Rhode Island Citizens Historical Association. In addition to the speakers named on the program, addresses were made by John H. Pierce, Esq., of Providence, and Hon. Thomas W. Bicknell, President of the Bristol County Historical Society, etc.

The addresses at the Memorial services and at the Dedication are printed in full, so far as they could be secured. The address of the Hon. Edwin C. Pierce was the same on both occasions and was considered a model of historic statement and rhetorical finish.

Contributors

The names of the contributors to the Michael Pierce fund to procure a suitable boulder to be placed near the spot where the fight occurred, March 26, 1676:

Mr. George E. Baker,
Mr. Edwin G. Baker,
Mr. Edwin G. Baker, Jr.,
Miss Susan Baker,
Mrs. Frederick Baker,
Mr. Thomas W. Bicknell,
Mrs. Frederick Cook,
Mr. Walter A. Dodge,
Mrs. Elisha Davis,
Mrs. Mary Davis,
Mr. Amasa M. Eaton,
Mr. Joseph H. Foster,
Mr. Abraham G. Hart,
Mrs. Lydia P. Hart,
Mrs. Philip A. Munroe,
Mr. Addison P. Munroe,
Mr. William A. Morgan,
Mr. Stephen S. Rich,
Mr. John W. Richmond,

Mrs. Cyril R. Wood,
Mrs. Charles H. Williams,
Mr. Lewis J. Pierce,
Mr. Warren R. Perce,
Mr. Bradford T. Pierce,
Mr. Edward E. Pierce, M. D.,
Mr. Thomas L. Pierce,
Mr. George L. Pierce,
Mr. Edwin C. Pierce,
Mr. Dexter D. Pierce,
Mr. John W. Pierce,
Mr. Frank H. Pierce,
Mr. William H. Pierce,
Mr. Augustus R. Pierce,
Mr. Ira Pierce,
Mr. George B. Pierce,
Miss Louise B. Pierce,
Mr. John H. Pierce,
Mr. Charles E. Pierce.

Preface

There has been no darker period in New England history than that of Philip's War, and no sadder experiences befell the early settlers than during the bloody epoch of 1675-6. We read the story with wonder that men and women and children could withstand so terrible a foe, fighting for life and home, and the names of those who fought those battles of our early civilization with savages should be held in grateful remembrance as heroes of freedom, with all those other brave men and women who have stood for home and country in all the other dark days of struggle from 1675 to 1905. Our garlands and flags should deck the graves of the Pilgrim Martyrs of 1675, when we remember the splendid achievements of the heroes of 1776, and of "The Boys in Blue" of 1861-65, sleeping side-by-side in the same cemeteries; "On Fame's eternal bead-roll worthy to be filed." Of King Philip, leader of the Wampanoags and the associate tribes in this bloody contest, it may be said, most truthfully that he was the greatest Indian Warrior of whom we have record. His control of his own tribe was supreme and unquestioned. His sagacity, shrewdness, and cunning in his dealings with the whites were unequaled in Indian strategy. His skill and diplomacy in uniting the New England tribes, some of which had been his life-long enemies, show a power of organization and control equal to, if not superior to that of the great statesmen and warriors of other races. His strong friendship shielded many of his benefactors in the hour of greatest peril, while his revenge was a fearful cyclone of terror, that swept all before it. His campaigns were short, sharp, and decisive. Within a twelve month from June, 1675, he had well-nigh destroyed the flower and fruit of fifty years of New England planting. His courage and coolness in battle made him the natural leader of the savage forces, while his caution protected him from personal sacrifice. The tomahawk, the scalping knife, and the torch were the only weapons he knew how to use, and stood him in the same stead as the rifle, the cannon and the bayonet of modern warfare.

Let us remember that Philip was a savage with the nature, the instincts, the traditions, the education of savage races for untold generations. He found himself in a corner of the old Wampanoag possessions, shut out from his hunting grounds, and shut up to the narrow peninsula of Consumpsit Neck, now Bristol, R. I. His young warriors clamored for the freedom of the chase, and the wild life of their fathers, made familiar to them by song and story, in the wigwam and in the forest. Instead of the wild deer roamed the contented kine of the white man. "The five rayle fence" of Swansea, obstructed his feet and his vision. What wonder then that Philip was restless and what wonder, when restrained, that he chafed under the unusual harness. He was a slave on his own soil. His own hands had wrought the fetters that bound him. Shall we blame him that he made one manly effort for freedom? Could we have done less and preserved our manly character? It was the freedom once more of the savage, or death at the White Man's rifle. He chose the latter in struggling for the former. Death was sweeter than civilization.

The Michael Pierce Fight was the most sanguinary and deadly struggle of King Philip's War. The story has been told by Captain Benjamin Church and other historians of the War. This volume commemorates in historic addresses and poems that notable event in our New England history.

Prayer

Rev. J H. LYON, D. D.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, let thy benediction rest on the exercises of this hour. We have come together to recall the days of old and the deeds of our fathers long ago. Help us, we beseech thee, to be sincerely grateful for ancestors so true and brave as they were who came to these shores in Thy Name. Thou didst lead them hither to fulfill thine own glorious purpose. Thou didst enable them to bear great privations and to suffer courageously even unto death. To-day we shall visit the scene of sacrifice where some of them gave up their lives. Inspire our hearts with noble sentiments while we linger here listening to the story of their fierce conflict with savage enemies, and fill us with reverence for all noble souls as we shall stand where they shed their blood. Help us, while we sanctify the past, to make the present sacred too. Grant us thy grace to live worthy of our inheritance in this land and its sacred history. Suffer us not to fail in the tests of trying times. Give us sustaining visions of thy presence, and confidence in thy wisdom and goodness, and the will to always do thy righteous will. More and more send out thy light and truth through our land and all the earth. Bless the people everywhere. Lead them into uprightness of life. Help us to take up cheerfully what may be allotted to us of sacrifice and service for the glory of thy name and the good of men. Forgive our transgressions, and accept us in Him through whom thy love has come to all mankind. Amen.

Address of Thomas W. Bicknell

President of the Bristol County Historical Society

The orator of the day will address you on the Michael Pierce Fight. It is my purpose to present the leading features of what is known as King Philip's War:

We meet, to-day, on this historic spot, to commemorate one event of that most tragic period of our whole New England history, the awful tragedy of King Philip's War; I speak advisedly. On Sunday, June 20, 1675, the young warriors of Philip attacked the people of Swansea, making depredations upon their homes, their cattle, and other property. From that fateful day until April 12, 1678, when a treaty of peace was entered into between the English and the Indians at Casco in Maine, five or six hundred of the men of military age of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies,—and one in every ten or twelve, in all the New England Colonies, were stealthily murdered, or fell in battle, or, becoming prisoners, were put to death with horrible tortures. Add to these, hundreds of women ravished, butchered, burned in their dwellings, or carried into an awful captivity for slavery or death, and a multitude of innocent children who met awful death by fire, and the scalping knife, and tomahawk of the ruthless savages. From the Connecticut to the Penobscot rivers, a reign of terror continued, night and day, summer and winter, for nearly three years. Swansea which had about fifty families in 1675, was depopulated. In Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies there were 80 or 90 towns of which twelve were utterly destroyed, and forty more were devastated by fire. There was scarcely a family that was not in mourning. In the first year of the war twelve towns of Plymouth Colony contributed £3,692, and at the end of the war, the war debt of the colony exceeded the value of the whole personal property of the people. Fire laid waste the towns of Providence, Springfield, Lancaster, Hadley, Medfield, Groton, Marlboro, Warwick and many other towns. Bancroft says the losses of the war equalled in value a half million of dollars. Six hundred houses were burned and of the able men of the

colonies, one in twenty had fallen to death, and one family in twenty had been burned out. Such an awful holocaust of precious New England life and property, acquired in a half century in the wilderness, was augmented two hundred and twenty-nine years ago, in the massacre, near this place, on the 26th of March, 1676, of Michael Pierce and nearly the whole of his heroic band.

Osamequin or Massassoit, was the sachem of the Wampanoags. On the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth in 1620, this tribe once great and powerful, occupied the territory between Narragansett Bay on the west and Plymouth Harbor and Cape Cod Bay on the east, and numbered probably four thousand warriors. Prior to the arrival of the Pilgrims a singular disease called the plague, the nature of which is not known, had reduced the tribe to only a few hundred warriors, and had so weakened it numerically that their chief, Massassoit, was ready to make a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with the first white settlers in order to cope with their enemies, the warlike Narragansetts who, under Canonicus and Miantonomi, dwelt on the west shore of Narragansett Bay. Sowams was the capital settlement of the great Chief Massassoit, where he spent most of his time in wigwam life, except when absent hunting or fishing. The fertile fields of the present towns of Swansea, East Providence and Barrington produced crops of corn, beans, tobacco, squashes and vegetables and the shores and waters the food on which the tribe subsisted. Edward Winslow, the diplomat of Plymouth, came to Sowams in 1621, and made that firm compact of peace and friendship, which bound the whites and the Indians in bonds of mutual, cordial sympathy; for a half century broken by Philip's War, in 1675. A well beaten trail extended from Sowams to Plymouth. From 1620 to 1661, during the life of the great chief, Massassoit, the most harmonious relations existed between the people of Sowams and their Indian neighbors. Massassoit was their near neighbor, "a five-rayle fence" separating the whites from the tribal lands on the peninsular between the two branches of the Sowams, where Massassoit resided. The great deed had made a reservation of this section called Chachacust until such time as the Indians should see fit to remove therefrom. On the death of Massassoit in 1661, his sons, Wamsutta and Metacom, named Alexander and Philip, became joint chiefs in command of the tribe, who made their royal residence at Mount Hope, on Consumpsit

Neck, now Bristol. Alexander died of a fever in 1662, and the rule of the tribe fell to Philip alone, a man whom the English suspected of insincerity, and at one time his movements were so threatening that the Plymouth Colony required him to make a temporary surrender of his arms, which he promised but failed to do. The Bay Colony sent three of her eminent citizens to have "a fair and deliberate hearing of the controversy." Finding Philip to be a capricious, passionate and untrustworthy man, says Palfrey, they warned him "to amend his ways if he expected peace; and that, if he went on in his refractory way, he must expect to smart for it."

For five years before the Indian outbreak, the people saw evident signs of the gathering storm. The Indians seemed restless under the restraints of fenced fields, of narrower and narrowing territorial rights and the laws which governed civilized society. Cattle that broke into their reserves were often killed, fences were broken down, and insults directed to defenceless persons. The young warriors found their hunting and fishing grounds occupied by the whites. All of which betokened to them the final loss of all their possessions. The death of Alexander was charged to English bad treatment and neglect. The peace-makers, Winslow, Brown, Myles, Willett and others, sought by all possible means to allay the rising tide of ill-feeling, jealousy and hostility, but still these passions grew, probably encouraged, certainly not restrained, by their proud sachem. The immediate cause of Philip's War is due to the murder of one Sausaman, "a praying Indian," who informed the Governor of Plymouth that Philip was engaged in a conspiracy to engage all the neighboring tribes in a race war against the whites. Philip hearing of this report went to Plymouth in March, 1675, and made solemn declarations of his innocence. Philip returned to Mount Hope, and not many days after the body of Sausaman was found under the ice of a pond, in Middleboro. Three Indians were arrested, tried, convicted of murder by a jury and six associate Indians, and were executed in June, 1675. About the time of the trial and execution, "Philip began to keep his men in arms about him and to gather strangers unto him, and to march about in arms toward the upper end of the Neck on which he lived and near to the English houses." The military watch, in the towns of Swansea, Rehoboth, and Somerset reported "that Philip and his men were constantly in arms and that many strange Indians flocked to him, and that they sent away

their wives to the Narragansetts"; that they "were giving frequent alarms by drums and guns in the night, and invaded the passage toward Plymouth, and their young Indians were earnest for war."

Swansea was the nearest town to Mount Hope. It contained as the historian says "forty dwelling houses, most of them very fair buildings." On Sunday, June 20, 1675, depredations were committed on the Swansea settlement and "two houses were burned" (Palfrey) while the Baptist Church and congregation were assembled for worship. The news spread to Plymouth and Boston and several military companies were ordered to proceed at once to Myles Garrison to protect the defenceless inhabitants. At the same time the government at Plymouth requested the people to observe Thursday, June 24, as a day of fasting and prayer. The church observed the day and when returning from the services, the people were surprised by the Indians and several were killed, among whom was Eldad Kingsley of Kickemuit, "upon whose bodies they exercised more than brutish barbarities, beheading, dismembering and mangling them, and exposing them in the most inhuman manner." The people gathered in the four strong garrison houses of the neighborhood and on the 28th, troops arrived at Myles Garrison from Boston and Plymouth. A skirmish took place on the evening of the 28th on the east side of the river beyond Myles Bridge, in which Benjamin Church, the noted Indian fighter, of Bristol, began his notable career. A party of Indians was discovered burning a house in Rehoboth and being fired upon, four or five of them were slain, one being Peebee, an undersachem of a part of the tribes, occupying the main neck of Barrington. On the 29th, the troops crossed Myles Bridge and on their way to Mount Hope found the heads of eight Englishmen, whom the Indians had murdered, set upon poles by the side of the road, near the Kickemuit River. The soldiers, reaching Mount Hope, found that Philip and his warriors had gone on their march of devastation and death in Taunton, Middleboro, and other towns of Plymouth Colony. The red man had tasted English blood, and his appetite was not to be satisfied until he had drunk to fullness of the best of both sexes of all ages, of the four New England Colonies.

It is not my purpose to give the bloody story of this tragic war, for we are here, to-day, only to note the events which circle about this notable spot. Here is an object lesson by which to teach and

learn the trying conditions of Colonial life in the most favored part of New England, and the terrible sacrifices by which our prosperity, union and liberties have been secured. Our ancestry were baptized in blood and fire in that awful calamity which swept over them, and it is to their fortitude, courage and martyrdom that we owe what they so dearly purchased and we enjoy.

Lodge, in his History of the English Colonies, says of Philip's War: "This long and desperate conflict fell upon New England with crushing effect. A vast amount of property had been destroyed and there was mourning in every household. The colonies were loaded with debt, while the enormous expenditure of men and money had crippled the public resources, weakened the government and depressed the spirit of the people."

In August, 1676, Philip came back from the carnival of blood "to meet his destiny in the beautiful land which held the graves of his forefathers and had been his home." "My heart breaks, I am ready to die," cried the chieftain. He was shot at Mount Hope by a faithless Indian, his head carried on a pole to Plymouth and exposed to public view, and his captive child was sold a slave to Bermuda.

The story of the most cruel tragedy of this conflict, the Captain Michael Pierce Fight, will be told by our learned and eloquent historian and orator, Hon. Edwin C. Pierce of Providence, a lineal descendant of the heroic leader.

The Michael Pierce Fight

By EDWIN C. PIERCE.

This is historic ground. It is the scene of one of the most tragic and most heroic events in early New England history. Here, in 1676, just a hundred years before the Declaration of American Independence, with a valor as distinguished as that of the Greek heroes at old Thermopylae, although unvictorious, our ancestors, undaunted, fronted inevitable defeat and certain death in hand-to-hand conflict with an outnumbering savage foe. Here they died upon the Bed of Honor.

Here we, their descendants, come, two hundred and thirty-one years after the day of blood and battle on which they painfully laid down their lives for their countrymen and for posterity, to celebrate their brave sacrifice, to erect here a memorial of their heroic devotion, and to consider and, if we may, profitably interpret the lessons to be drawn from the history of that tragic event and that serious and strenuous time.

Let us first review the facts that happened here, the actualities of the tragedy, the fortitude and desperate valor, unsurpassed in the annals of warfare, here displayed; and then consider somewhat the war in which Pierce's Fight was a bloody day, the merits of the war, the cause for which they died.

The day of Pierce's Fight was Sunday, March 26th, 1676. It was in the midst of Philip's War. That war, the bloody and decisive struggle between the English colonists and the Indians, had been raging for nearly a year. The Narragansetts, that proud and powerful tribe with whom Roger Williams and the Rhode Island and Providence colonists had long maintained unbroken peace and friendship, had at last been drawn into hostilities towards the colonists. In December, 1675, the Narragansetts had been attacked in their strong fort in South Kingstown, defeated, slaughtered by hundreds, and their power forever broken. With the courage of despair, the still formidable remnant of the Narragansett warriors took the war-path early in the Spring of 1676, under their brave chief, who

knew not fear, Nanunteenoo, better known as Canonchet, son of the famous Miantonomi.

The Narragansetts, while renewing, and with sincerity so far as may be judged, to Roger Williams pledges of immunity for him did not withhold their vengeance from settlers in Rhode Island. Parties of warriors penetrated into Plymouth Colony, ravaging and killing. Dwelling in continual alarm, the Plymouth Colony was aroused to action for the defense of the homes and the lives of its people. This defense could only be effectually made, the bloody invasion of the Plymouth country could only be repelled, by waging offensive war against the Narragansetts, by pursuing the marauding bands and attacking them wherever they might be found in their forest fastnesses.

The duty of leading in the pursuit and attack of the Narragansetts was assigned to Captain Michael Pierce, of Scituate, that beautiful town on the Massachusetts Bay northward from Plymouth. More than twenty years before, the chivalric captain of Plymouth, of the early days, Myles Standish, had been borne to his grave in fair Duxbury, overlooked by Captain's Hill on which a stately monument has been reared in his honor.

Now, when first afterwards occasion arose for the military defense of the Plymouth Colony, Michael Pierce, of Scituate, appears as the successor of him who so long and so worthily wielded the sword of Gideon for that defense. At the outbreak of Philip's War, Michael Pierce was about sixty years of age, having been born in England about the year 1615. He came to the Plymouth Colony about the year 1645, a quarter of a century after the landing of the Pilgrims, and settled almost immediately in Scituate, where he ever after resided. He appears to have been a brother of that John Pierce of London, who secured a patent, or royal grant, for New England, before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, which patent he assigned to the Plymouth Company after their settlement had been effected. He was also, according to the early historians of New England, a brother of that Captain William Pierce who was the most famous master of ships that came to the New England coast; the warm friend of Winslow and Bradford, who commanded the Mayflower in New England waters, although not on her first famous voyage, the "Charity" when she brought Winslow and the first cattle, the "Lion" when she arrived with provisions in the crisis of the famine, Roger

Williams being his passenger upon that memorable occasion, and who while fighting the Spaniards in the West Indies was mortally wounded and found his grave in the ocean, on which he had made his long and honorable career. Michael Pierce was with the Plymouth forces in the bloody Narragansett fight in South Kingstown in December, 1675. Earlier in that year he made his will which is of record in the Plymouth Colony records, the preamble of which is:

"I, Michael Pierce of Scituate, in the government of New Plymouth in America, being now by the appointment of God, going out to war against the Indians doe make this my last will and testament."

Acting under orders from the Plymouth Colony, Captain Pierce with a company comprising about fifty Englishmen and twenty friendly Cape Indians, started in pursuit of the marauding Narragansetts. The Plymouth band proceeded without encounter with the foe as far as the Rehoboth settlement which was on the extreme western boundary of the Plymouth Colony, separated from the Providence Colony by the Seekonk.

The men of Rehoboth were living in constant expectation of attack from the hostile Indians, and the arrival of Captain Pierce's company must have been most welcome.

Making his temporary headquarters at Rehoboth, Captain Pierce on Saturday, the 25th of March, sallied forth with a small party of his men in search of the hostiles. Discovering the Narragansetts in considerable force the colonials attacked and, without loss to themselves, inflicted considerable losses upon the enemy. Captain Pierce on this day, does not appear wanting in prudence. Rev. Noah Newman of Rehoboth in a letter written the next day, after recounting that Captain Pierce "upon discovering the enemy, fought him, without damage to himself, and judged that he had considerably damnified them," goes on to say:

"Yet he being of no great force, chose rather to retreat and go out the next morning, with a recruit of men; and accordingly he did, taking pilots from us, that were acquainted with the ground." And the account proceeds: "But it pleased the Sovereign God so to order it, that they were enclosed with a great multitude of the enemy which hath slain fifty-two of our Englishmen and eleven Indians—18 from Scituate, encluding Capt. Pierce; Marshfield, 9; Duxbury, 4; Sandwich, 5; Barnstable, 6; Yarmouth, 5; Eastham, 4. Thomas Mann is just returned with a sore wound."

The colonial captain had received intelligence that a party of the enemy lay near Blackstone's house at Study Hill in Cumberland, and appears not to have been daunted by the apprehension reasonably to have been entertained that Canonchet with all the warriors of the Narragansett nation might be close at hand, preparing an ambuscade. The Plymouth captain, however, did not omit to summon all the force upon which he could call. Before leaving Rehoboth to march to the attack, he despatched a messenger to Captain Andrew Edmunds, of Providence, with a letter asking Edmunds to meet him at a spot above Pawtucket, on the river, and assist him in the enterprise. The messenger reached Providence on Sunday morning, but either there was delay in the delivery of the letter or the Providence men were not willing to leave Providence undefended. At any rate no reenforcement from Providence reached the Plymouth colonials.

As the ambuscade was near Quinsniket, there can be no doubt that Canonchet with perhaps seven hundred warriors of the brave and now utterly desperate Narragansett nation had made this rocky fastness his base of operations. There, under the overhanging rock of the hill top the savage chieftain held his council fire and the plan for the ambuscade was laid. The sortie of the colonials from Rehoboth on Saturday must have been reported to Canonchet, and he must have judged that encouraged by their success, the English would continue their advance, and accordingly he prepared to ambush, overwhelm and annihilate them.

Early on Sunday morning the colonials marched from Rehoboth. Their number, recruited at Rehoboth, amounted to a few over sixty English and about twenty friendly Wampanoags from the Cape. They doubtless proceeded across the Seekonk plains and skirted the east bank of the Blackstone until they reached a point on the river above Pawtucket Falls where the river was fordable, the territory at that point being then called the Attleborough Gore. The territory on the west bank of the river is now in Central Falls. There can be no doubt as to the spot because at no other place on the river could a large body of men approach a ford. At this point the ford was approached through a ravine having a wide level ground on either side of which rose a wood crowned hill. The hills have long since been leveled. The plan of Canonchet was to draw the colonials into this defile and then attack them from the hills and

to cut off the retreat by quickly throwing a strong force in their rear. As a decoy a few Indians showed themselves rambling in a wood. They fled at the approach of the colonials, limping as they ran. The colonials supposed them to have been wounded in the fight of Saturday and gave chase. There is uncertainty from the narratives whether these decoys were seen on the west bank of the river or the east. One story is that they were seen on the west bank by a party which had pushed across the river in advance of the main body of the colonials, and there is probability in this because prudence would dictate that in warfare with a foe so cunning, an advance party would be thrown across the river.

An experienced Indian fighter like Captain Church would doubtless have sent his spies upon the hills on the east bank before entering the ravine.

It is probable that as at that time of the year only the evergreens of the forest were in leaf, the colonials were beguiled into a sense of security, not deeming it possible for the enemy to lie in ambush in great numbers, and advanced with less caution than if it had been later in the season. Doubtless they swept the low hills with their eyes, and doubtless the foe, with the exception of a concealed spy, lay a considerable distance back from the brow flat upon the ground and covered by dry leaves and hidden behind rocks and trees.

At any rate, Captain Pierce led his company into the ravine and approached the river, probably following the advance party of his men which had crossed in safety. Suddenly the silence was rent with savage cries, and springing from their concealment on the commanding hills, the Narragansetts directed their deadly and painfully wounding arrows upon the colonials who were thus entrapped. Canonchet with all his warriors was upon them. The highest estimate of the number of the Narragansetts that attacked Capt. Pierce's little force is about a thousand. Other narratives estimate six or seven hundred. If there were six hundred, the colonials must have realized that their doom was sealed, except indeed for the hope that Capt. Edmunds would shortly arrive with his Providence company. Instantly the colonial captain realized that his only chance lay in getting out of the defile by crossing the river. On the west bank there was an open, or at least not heavily wooded, plain, in which his men would be out of arrow shot from the hills and where they could at least make a better defense than was possible in the ravine

Then, too, they would be on the side on which Capt. Edmunds might be marching to their aid. It seems probable that in order to make the decoy successful, the warriors on the west side lay in ambush a good distance from the river, so that the colonials were able to cross the river, probably not without loss, and gain the open space where they proposed to make their stand.

While the enemy was swarming down the ravine and across the river in hot pursuit, a band of at least three hundred Narragansetts rushed upon the colonials from their concealment on the west side, so that the colonials were now completely surrounded. Capt. Pierce now threw his men into a circle placing his men in ranks, back to back, and facing the foe they thus fought to the death.

No banners waved, no martial music stimulated their ardor, no sounds except the reverberations of musketry and the terrifying yells of the infuriated warriors who encompassed them about. The colonials were indeed better supplied with firearms than the enemy, but they were of the ancient, slow firing sort, while the arrows of the foe were directed against them from behind trees and rocks with unerring aim, and tomahawks hurled through the air by the powerful savage were felling them to the ground. Resolved to sell their lives at as dear a rate as possible, the colonials stood their ground with ever thinning ranks, for about two hours, keeping themselves in order and the enemy at a little distance.

The formation of the order of battle is related by a chronicle of the time in these words:

"Captain Pierce cast his sixty-three English and twenty Indians into a ring, and six fought back to back, and were double, double distance all in one ring, whilst the Indians were as thick as they could stand thirty deep."

Imagine the horror of that Sunday morning scene on the bank of the Blackstone. It was both a fight and a massacre. See that circle of determined men fighting their forlorn hope! See the circle ever contracting as the men fall in their places! The dead lie thick upon the ground, and how many fall covered with bleeding arrow wounds which disable but do not immediately kill! Doubtless as the circle narrows, those who are still in the language of the old chronicle "keeping the enemy at a distance and themselves in order," pull their wounded and dying comrades within the circle to save them to the last from the tomahawks of the nearer drawing foe. Sus-

tained for the first hour by the hope that succor from Providence would come, as the second hour wears on, that hope has died in their hearts. Less than half of the original circle still survive and they are bleeding, exhausted and despairing. Their captain lies dead on the field. Michael Pierce fell early in the fight. But to soldiers such as these it little matters that the leader falls. They fight on, still keeping themselves in order. In ordinary warfare the soldier when clearly overpowered may either retreat or surrender, and surrendering save his life. They could not retreat, and it was better to die than surrender. They can now do less execution upon the enemy and the infuriated savages are rushing upon them with uplifted tomahawk. Still the men of Plymouth stand in order and hold at bay for yet a little longer the warriors of Canonchet. And with them to the end stand their faithful Indian allies. The effectiveness of the defence appears by the great loss suffered by the Narragansetts. Some of them taken prisoners a few days later confessed that one hundred and forty were killed before their victory was won. Drake's Indian Chronicle estimates the loss of the Narragansetts at above three hundred, but this is probably an exaggeration.

At last when, as the tradition is, scarcely twenty of the colonials maintain their footing, they give over futile resistance and break and run, each man for himself. Nine of them are seized and made captive. One of the friendly Indians, Amos, fought until the colonials had ceased to fight and then by blacking his face with powder, as he saw the Narragansetts had done, mingled with them and escaped. A few other of Capt. Pierce's Indians and fewer still of the Englishmen, perhaps three or four, by artifice and good fortune, managed to escape.

The Narragansetts proceeded with their prisoners to the spot in Cumberland now called "Nine Men's Misery." There, according to tradition, the captives were seated upon a rock, a fire lighted, and the war dance preparatory to the torture was begun. The chronicles say that, differing among themselves as to the mode of torture, the Indians dispatched their prisoners with the tomahawk. But, of what happened at Nine Men's Misery there is no real evidence. The bodies of the prisoners were found and buried by the English a little later, and a monumental pile of stones erected in honor of the brave and unfortunate men.

We may imagine the wild and vengeful joy with which the

warriors of Canonchet celebrated their victory in their fastness at Quinsniket. Encouraged by their success, the very next day after the fight the Narragansetts descended upon Rehoboth and burned forty houses, and before the end of March Providence was attacked and fifty-four buildings burned.

Arnold's History narrates as follows:

"Two places in the town had been fortified mainly through the efforts of Roger Williams, who, although seventy-seven years of age, accepted the commission of Captain. A tradition is preserved, that when the enemy approached the town the venerable captain went out alone to meet and remonstrate with them. 'Massachusetts,' said he, 'can raise thousands of men at this moment, and if you kill them, the King of England will supply their places as fast as they fall.' 'Well, let them come,' was the reply, 'we are ready for them. But as for you, brother Williams, you are a good man; you have been kind to us many years; not a hair of your head shall be touched.' The savages were true to their ancient friend. He was not harmed, but the town was nearly destroyed."

The capture of Canonchet soon followed, on the 4th of April. Arnold thus relates this decisive event:

"Four companies of Connecticut volunteers, with three of Indians, immediately marched to attack Canonchet. Capt. George Denison of Stonington, who led one of the companies, was conspicuous for his zeal and bravery. This force surprised Canonchet near the scene of Pierce's massacre at Pawtucket, and a rout ensued. The Sachem fled, but having slipped in wading the river, was overtaken on the opposite bank by a Pequot and surrendered without resistance. The first Englishman who came up to him was a young man named Robert Stanton, who put some questions to the royal captive. 'You much child! Let your brother or chief come. Him I will answer!' was the contemptuous reply after regarding the youth for a moment in silence. His life was offered him on condition of the submission of his tribe. He treated the offer with calm disdain and when it was urged upon him, desired 'to hear no more about it.' He was sent in charge of Capt. Denison to Stonington, where a council of war condemned him to be shot. When informed that he must die, he made this memorable answer, which may challenge the loftiest sentiment recorded in classic or modern history. 'I like it

well; I shall die before my heart is soft, or I have said anything unworthy of myself.'"

And Arnold adds:

"His conduct on this occasion has been justly compared with that of Regulus before the Roman Senate, than which the chronicles of time present but one sublimer scene. A higher type of manly character, more loftiness of spirit, or dignity of action, the qualities that make heroes of men, and once made demigods of heroes, than are found in this western savage, may be sought in vain among the records of pagan heroism or of Christian fortitude."

Canonchet was executed. He was the last great Sachem of the Narragansetts.

Arnold's tribute to Canonchet suggests inquiry as to whether right was with the colonials or with their Indian enemies in Philip's War. This war was the first which had stained the annals of the Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island colonies. More than fifty years of peace with the Indians followed the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620.

Massasoit, Sachem of the Wampanoags, who had been conquered by the powerful Narragansetts, welcomed the Englishmen as protectors and made a treaty of friendship with them. He kept it faithfully for forty years until his death. Arnold asserts that the English did not so faithfully keep the terms of the treaty, and that Massasoit quietly submitted to repeated aggressions upon his land and liberties. After his death his son Wamsutta, called by the English Alexander, succeeded to the sovereignty of the Wampanoags. Arnold considers that the act of Wamsutta in ceding land on the west bank of the Seekonk river to Providence, drew upon him the displeasure of the Plymouth government. It is to be remembered that at that time there was enmity between the colony of Roger Williams and the Massachusetts colony and little of friendship between Providence and Plymouth. A few years before, Miantonomi, the Narragansett Sachem, had been treacherously put to death by Uncas, Sachem of the Mohegans, with the sanction and virtual procurement of the commissioner of the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies. Arnold is of the opinion that the real offence of Miantonomi which drew upon him the fatal hostility of the Massachusetts government was his sale of Shawomet to the heretic Gorton. Arnold characterizes Miantonomi as a "faithful and honorable ally of the

Providence colony," saying that "to him and to his uncle the sage Canonicus, Rhode Island owes more than to all others, Christian or heathen, for the preservation of the lives of her founders."

Wamsutta was seized by the Plymouth authorities on a charge of conspiracy, but before he could be brought before the Court he was taken ill and died. The Indians charged the English with poisoning Wamsutta. There was no ground for this suspicion, but the seizure of the successor of the faithful Massasoit was a harsh and unjust measure, upon no good cause, and was openly condemned in Plymouth and among the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay.

Metacomet, or King Philip, the second son of Massasoit, now succeeded his brother as chief Sachem of the Wampanoags. Preserving the semblance of friendship with the English, Philip beyond a doubt for twelve long years plotted for a union of all the tribes against the whites. To John Borden, an Englishman and intimate friend of Philip, the Wampanoag Sachem made a remarkable declaration on the eve of hostilities, reciting the wrongs done to the red men by the English, and closing with the words: "I am determined not to live till I have no country." Arnold gives in full this statement of Philip and says of it:

"This is the preamble to a declaration of war, more striking from its origin, and more true in its statements, than any with which we are acquainted. It is the mournful summary of accumulated wrongs that cry aloud for battle, not for revenge alone, but for the very existence of the oppressed. It is the sad note of preparation, sounded by a royal leader, that summons to their last conflict the aboriginal lords of New England. It is the death song of Metacomet, chanted on the site of his ancestral home, before plunging into the fatal strife that was to end only with his life, and to seal forever the fortunes of his race."

Philip's War was the first conflict with the Indians in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, but many years before there had been a war between the English and the Pequots of Connecticut. The governor of Plymouth remonstrated with the Massachusetts government for having needlessly provoked this war. In the prosecution of this war the English were aided by the Narragansetts. The English surprised the Pequots in their fortified camp near Mystic. The Pequots were buried in sleep. The English applied the torch and burned the Pequot village, and put the scarcely resisting Pequots to

the sword. Men, women, children, to the number of nearly seven hundred were slaughtered. Seven only were taken prisoners and seven escaped. Another Pequot camp was broken up, the men taken prisoners were killed and the women and children sent to Boston as slaves. By such bloody instruction did the Puritans of Massachusetts and Connecticut sow the seeds of Philip's War.

From his coming to Providence, Roger Williams for nearly forty years had lived in friendship with the Narragansetts. Canonicus and Miantonomi were his friends and the friends of the Providence colonists, and Canonchet took up the tradition of peace and amity. The wicked murder of Miantonomi by the procurement of Massachusetts rankled in the breasts of the Narragansetts, and the young men of the nation sympathized with Philip when he attempted the confederacy of the tribes. But Canonchet remained faithful to his friendship with Roger Williams and the Narragansetts did not go upon the war path as a tribe, although a few of the young men probably joined Philip's marauding bands.

Rhode Island was not a member of the confederacy of New England colonies, her people condemned the murder of Miantonomi, the Quakers were in control in her government, she disapproved of many acts by which the other colonies had provoked the war, she remained officially neutral. Some of her people, however, aided the other colonies with provisions and volunteers. Events conspired to bring the war home to Rhode Island. Philip's Indians, defeated at Springfield, sought refuge in the Narragansett country, and were hospitably received. The Massachusetts English demanded of Canonchet the surrender of Philip's Indians, who had placed their women and children under the protection of the Narragansett Indians. "Not a Wampanoag, nor the paring of a Wampanoag's nail, shall be delivered up," was the proud answer of the son of Miantonomi. The united colonies now sent an army of over eleven hundred men to attack the Narragansetts.,

The invasion of the Narragansett country was made without consulting the government of Rhode Island, which was a violation of the royal charter. But the people of Rhode Island, as well as the Narragansetts themselves, were divided in their counsels and volunteers joined the army of invasion as it marched through Providence and Warwick.

On a Sunday morning in December, 1675, the Narragansett

fort was attacked. The greatest battle in New England colonial history ensued. It was a terrible and a bloody conflict, and for hours the issue was uncertain. Against the entreaty of the valiant and humane Captain Church, the greatest of the Indian fighters of New England, the wigwams within the fort were set on fire. Five hundred wigwams were burned, sick, wounded, infant and aged perishing in the flames. Six hundred Indians lost their lives, half of them in the fight and half of them in the flames. The English loss was heavy although less than that of the Narragansetts. A majority of the superior officers fell in the fight. Michael Pierce was in the fight but escaped with his life only to fall in the March following.

Nothing now remained for the Narragansetts except to go upon the war path. In the Spring they inflicted vengeance far and wide. The remnant of the once proud nation must have known that it was now for them a death struggle, that the expulsion of the English was a vain endeavor. After the destruction of their stronghold in December, Indian overtures for peace had been rejected and Canonchet now fought with the fury of desperation. Pierce's Fight was the last Indian victory. The capture of Canonchet was the beginning of the end, and the death of Philip at Mt. Hope soon followed.

Before the death of Philip, but after Pierce's Fight, the English surprised the Indian foe in a swamp near Warwick. Arnold relates: "A great slaughter ensued. Magnus, the old queen of Narragansett, a sister of Ninigret was taken, and with ninety other captives put to the sword. One hundred and seventy-one Indians fell in this massacre without the loss of a single man of the English."

Hear also Arnold when he says: "One thing should be said to the lasting honor of the red man. The treatment of their prisoners was generally humane, more so than was that of their Christian conquerers. Some of the soldiers, it is true, were tortured, but only a few, while the captives taken by the English were mostly butchered in cold blood, or sent into Spanish slavery. The English women were uniformly treated with respect. In not a single instance was violence offered to their persons during their captivity. The chivalric honor of the savage was the inviolable protection of his female captive. This is the unvarying testimony of many women, of all ages and conditions, who were carried away in the sacking of the towns."

This favorable judgment of the historian of Rhode Island must

not obscure the terrible tragedy with which Philip began the war at Swanzev when "the road was strewn with corpses of men, women and children, scorched, dismembered, and mangled."

And John Fiske in his "The Beginnings of New England" says the Indian "treatment of the prisoners varied with the caprice or the cupidity of the captors. Those for whom a substantial ransom might be expected fared comparatively well; to others death came as a welcome relief."

But Mr. Fiske says: "In England, as elsewhere, however, it was, when looked at with our eyes, a rough and brutal time. It was a day of dungeons, whipping-posts, and thumbscrews, when slight offenders were maimed and bruised and great offenders cut into pieces by sentence of court."

With the Puritan to suppose that one part of the Bible could be less authoritative than another would have been to him an incomprehensible heresy; and bound between the same covers that included the Sermon on the Mount were tales of wholesale massacre perpetrated by God's command. Evidently the red men were not stray children of Israel, but rather Philistines, Canaanites, heathen, sons of Belial, firebrands of hell, demons whom it was no more than right to sweep from the face of the earth. Writing in this spirit, the chroniclers of the time were completely callous in their accounts of suffering and ruin inflicted upon Indians, and, as has elsewhere been known to happen, those who did not risk their own persons were more truculent in tone than the professional fighters. Of the narrators of the war, perhaps the fairest toward the Indian is the doughty Captain Church, while none is more bitter and cynical than the Ipswich pastor, William Hubbard."

Mr. Fiske also says: "It is difficult, moreover, for the civilized man and the savage to understand each other."

Mutual misunderstanding and distrust was perhaps inevitable between the Indians and the early colonists of New England. Still the long period of peace, and mutual services, is to be remembered; the well cemented friendship of the most powerful of all the Indian tribes, the Narragansetts, to the Rhode Island settlers, is to be considered.

I am inclined to the opinion that Philip's War might have been avoided by the practice of the precepts of Christ by his professed followers, and that if the treatment of the Indians had more gener-

ally been as just and considerate as that practiced by Roger Williams and his associates, the white man and the red man might have dwelt together in peace. There really was room enough for both. The Indians were not nomads, they were willing to live by agriculture and to progress in civilization.

However the responsibility for Philip's War may be awarded, or divided, the fact remains that Michael Pierce and his brave companions from the Plymouth towns fought the fight and died the death as heroes. They were sent here as soldiers to drive back a vengeful and dreaded foe. They died in honorable combat with their faces to the enemy, and history has no record of a bravery in war more splendid than was here displayed by these New England ancestors of ours. They were not personally responsible for the war, nor for any of its cruelty and massacre.

Some of them, at least, like the men of Scituate, came from towns whose inhabitants were distinguished in that stern Puritan age by gentle manners and liberal views. The chivalric captain of Plymouth, the sword and buckler of the colony, was by his character and his career worthy of the monument that stands on Captain's Hill looking towards Provincetown, but surely if Standish, dying in his bed, is thus deserving, his successor sent out by Plymouth in her defence and his brave comrades, who faced certain death and suffered it after the manner of the old classic heroes, should also be thus honored.

There is a just pride and an inspiring incentive in ancestry of heroic deeds and noble lives, but the lesson for us the descendants of the brave men who here performed the stern duty imposed upon them is not that valor and fidelity on the field of battle give higher title to honorable distinction than service to society in the ways of peace. The victories of peace should have even greater renown than those of war. The fearless and virile qualities may be developed amidst the trials, temptations, sacrifices and conflicts which in our luxurious age await those who obey the call of duty. Our conflicts are not with the untutored red men of the forest, they are with the more puissant forces of corruption and greed. They also are forced upon us, the battle field is not of our choosing, the courage demanded is both moral and physical, there is no retreat, and surrender is moral death. Duty done on such battlefields is of the same quality and worth as that done amidst scenes of blood and carnage. Most of

those who do it best may find scant reward while living and no recognition from posterity; but

“The longer on this earth we live
And weight the various qualities of men . . .
The more we feel the high stern-featured beauty
Of plain devotedness to duty.
Steadfast and still, nor paid with mortal praise,
But finding amplest recompense,
For life’s ungarlanded expense
In work done squarely and unwasted days.”

Mark Ye Their Graves

HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH.

I.

Ah, well, ye old towns, 'neath the mighty elms' shadows
Do ye call back your sons, as the swallows we come
To the chimneys of old, and by brook singing meadows,
We cross once again the old thresholds of home.
We can never forget them, whom history's pages
Give back to our keeping, in loyalty's trust;
Whose deeds lead us on to the consummate ages,
And arise in their worth o'er the kingdoms of dust,
That shall answer all prayers and all prophesies yet—
Mark, mark ye their graves,
Lest ye forget.

II.

True, true to the spirit that made us a nation,
To-day we assemble where thunder the Falls,
To give to the future with pride and elation
Memorials of deeds that puissance recalls;
Where Pierce's bold men 'gainst Canonchet uplifted
The red hands of martyrs and sunk to the sod,
We pay a last tribute to true valor gifted
With the light that shines clear through the ages of God.
Unselfish their aims, whose stars do not set
Mark, mark ye, their glorious graves
Lest we forget!

III.

Sing, sing we the song of our nation's defenders,
The years of prosperity grow and increase;
New eras advance with their shadowless splendors,
And blow the war bugles the sweet notes of peace,
To our hearts take their memories, deeds made eternal,
To ambers embalming, to shadowless fames,
Who die in our needs, light the ages supernal,
The white stars of destiny rise in their names.
The spirit of sacrifice leaves no regret—
Mark, mark ye, the glorious graves—
Lest ye forget!

IV.

Mark, mark ye, their graves who 'gainst savagery lifted
Their shields of protection, where red chiefs arose,
And in the still streams in their white canoes drifted,
And hid in the hazels their quivers and bows.
Thy Falls, O Pawtucket, that white foamed and thundered
By the green mossy graves of the martyrs, still flow
Where Pierce's bold men from their perilled homes sundered,
To Humanity gave all life can bestow.
'Tis martyrs whose stars arise never to set—
Mark, mark ye, their glorious graves
Lest ye forget!

V.

Their deeds fill our lives, their example the ages,
And shadowless ever their fame shall remain.
The white marbles bloom for their sake, and the pages
Of history they gladden, and poesy's strain.
Forget not their deed who the free flag unrolled,
Their purpose and will
Be it ours to fulfill,
And all that is lustrous their valor foretold—
Their work is not ended, their cause leads us yet:
Mark, mark ye their glorious graves
Lest ye forget!

VI.

In the grand march of heroes, one aim thrills the ages,
And Pericles heart is with Washington one;
And justice and peace, and the visions of sages,
Are stars of the cycles that followed thy sun.
Forget not, forget not, those patriots bold,
Undying the claims
That gave life to their names.
Men have what they give, the true stars do not set—
Mark, mark ye their glorious graves
Lest ye forget!

VII.

Theirs, theirs was the furnace fire, theirs the direction,
Ours, ours, the fulfillment, in centuries supreme,
Be it ours to bear onward their aims to perfection,
In the spirit they died, all the world to redeem.
Forget not, forget not, those commoners bold,
Their purpose and will,
Be it ours to fulfill,
Their work is not ended, their cause leads us yet.
Mark, mark ye their glorious graves,
Lest ye forget!

VIII.

Not for fame or for glory their life blood they offered,
Not for fame or for glory their lives they laid down.
They died for their homes, for humanity proffered
Their all and they dreamed not of martyrdom's crown.
Who deny themselves most, their own selves forgetting,
In high compensation the most shall receive;
They shall shine as the stars in the zenith unsetting,
Who most help the ages to win and achieve.
We honor ourselves o'er their graves to bow down,—
"A people is known by the men that they crown."

Address of Hon. Thomas W. Bicknell at Dedication of Monument

Delivered at Dedication of Monument September 21, 1907.

"The value of the study of local history is forcibly illustrated to-day in dedicating this monument with its eloquent tablet in memory of the Captain Michael Pierce Fight. It is the open door to a period of vast interest to us of Rhode Island, as well as to all students of American history. Its moral value as illustrating the influence of a great event to lift men and society to new planes of action is most apparent.

The accession of Philip to the Chief Sachemship of the Wampanoags was the opening event of a century of conflict between the weak and scattered colonists of New England and the United Savage tribes, with their allies, the French, on our Northern and Western frontier. Fifty years of peace and comparative prosperity had enabled the first settlers to clear the forests, erect substantial farm-houses and cultivate the arts of a primitive civilization in the presence and under the protection of the great Sachem, Massassoit, the life-long friend of the White Man. Massassiot was a savage, but a man of peace. Philip, his son, was a man of war and the leader in a united conspiracy of the New England Indians to destroy the New England colonies.

From the outbreak of the Indians at Swansea, June, 1675, to the defeat of Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham, in 1759, the sword of the colonists was not sheathed, and the years of the century were few, when the torch, the bullet, and the tomahawk did not threaten the daily toil and the night vigils of our ancestors. Three generations of men were born, lived, labored and died under the awful fear of a secret foe, whose sworn purpose was to wipe the infant colonies from the map of New England.

In that century of terrible conflict, the New England colonies with Canada bore the brunt of the struggle and suffered unmeasured losses in men and means. In the State of Rhode Island we have three monuments that mark the events in this opening struggle, of tragic interests and of historic moment.

In the Narragansett Swamp is a stately monument, which tells of the awful slaughter of the Narragansetts without regard to sex or age, by the sword, by bullet, and by fire. Near this spot on March 26, 1676, Canonchet and his braves outnumbered, surrounded and massacred Captain Michael Pierce and his brave band, who, with Spartan valor, met death at the hands of infuriated savages, whose battle cry was 'revenge' and 'death!'

At Mount Hope, Bristol, is a granite memorial which marks the spot where King Philip was slain, in August, 1676. During that war, twelve towns were utterly destroyed, many more pillaged and burned, and there was mourning in every household. It cost the colonists more than half a million dollars and the colony of Plymouth was left under a debt exceeding the total valuation of its property. The enormous expenditure of men and money crippled the public resources and weakened the government, and terror thrilled the hearts of the people. It was the dark and dreadful day of New England history, and Puritan Divines predicted the awful day of the final Judgment at the hands of the Almighty.

The historic value of this monument, which was planned in the memorial services held at Central Falls by the Bristol County Historical Society, three years ago, inheres, not in what we do or say to-day, but in the brave, heroic sacrifice of a body of American colonists in defence of home, kindred and country. They were of the stuff that filled the Pass at Thermopylae, that braved death as the Swiss Guards in Paris, that "into the valley of death, into the mouth of Hell rode the Six Hundred," that faced the fiery breath of war at Bull Run, Chickamauga and Gettysburg and that made the final gallant charge at Caney. Men of such spirit never die. They are earth's Immortals. Among the early martyrs to Civil Liberty the names of Captain Michael Pierce and his associates will be enrolled among the most worthy.

That century of struggle did more than show the patriotism and self-sacrifice of the colonists. A common danger made defence a common cause and united diverse people for mutual protection. The New England Confederacy was the direct result of Philip's Bloody War, and the Union of New England colonies was the preparatory work for the larger union of the thirteen colonies for defence in the American Revolution, and still further the practical and vital reason for the Federal Union. We are the united people of to-day for the trials that cemented the hearts and hopes of the American colonists two and a half centuries ago.

Address by John H. Pierce, Esq.

It is with a sense of duty as well as great pleasure, as a descendant of Captain Michael Pierce, that I express my sincere thanks to the officers and members of the Rhode Island Citizens Historical Association, to the committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society and to all others who have in any way assisted by word, act, or contribution towards this memorial. Especially are we under obligation to Mr. Arthur Perry Brayton of Fall River for the gift of this boulder, to Hon. Thomas W. Bicknell and to the descendants of Captain Pierce, and friends for aid in furthering this object. For many years I have felt a strong desire that some recognition of the great sacrifice made by Captain Pierce and his comrades near this spot should be made. To-day we have come here to dedicate this monument as a memorial of their heroic deeds. This memorial will do for the present generation as an object lesson and may lead the enquiring mind to investigate and learn more of the terrible sufferings and hardships of the early settlers of New England. This is my earnest desire that we, their descendants and fellow citizens, who are enjoying the benefits of this goodly land may not forget how dearly they were bought, and may it lead us all to prize more highly the great heritage left us. I cannot find words to express the great satisfaction I feel in being present and participating in the exercises on this occasion.

Address by Hon. Amasa M. Eaton

About fifty of the Puritan settlers of Swansea of which this region then formed part, accompanied by a few friendly Indians, were here overwhelmed and massacred by several hundred Indians, but three escaping and some being put to death after the fight, by torture, at "Nine Men's Misery." These facts and figures tell the tale. The desperate fight and massacre here is only paralleled in all the annals of Indian warfare, by the massacre of Custer's force, just two centuries later. Among the men who thus met death here were two of my ancestors, John Fitch, Jr., and John Miller, Jr., sons of the two pioneers of the same names.

As I look about on this beautiful October day, I see before me the descendants of others among these pioneers who sacrificed their lives on this spot. Let not their sacrifice be in vain. Inspired by the knowledge that these men of our blood, our ancestors, here fought and died in defence of their families and their homes, let us highly resolve that we will do what we can to prove ourselves by our lives and our services to our country, worthy of being known as the descendants of these men.

THE PIERCE MASSACRE,
MARCH 26, 1676,
Near Pawtucket Falls, Mass. (Now R. I.)

PLYMOUTH COLONY COMPANY,
IN COMMAND OF
CAPT. MICHAEL PIERCE, SCITUATE, MASS.

Names of the slain as given by Rev. Noah Newman, of Rehoboth,
April 27, 1676.

SCITUATE.

CAPT. MICHAEL PIERCE,
SAMUEL RUSSELL,
BENJAMIN CHITTENDEN,
JOHN LOTHROP,
GERSHOM DODSON,
SAMUEL PRATT,
THOMAS SAVARY,
JOSEPH WADE,
WILLIAM WILSON,
JEREMIAH BARSTOW,
JOHN ENSIGN,
JOSEPH COWEN,
JOSEPH PERRY,
JOHN PERRY,
JOHN ROSE,

DUXBURY.

JOHN SPRAGUE,
BENJAMIN (SOULE) SOAL,
THOMAS HUNT,
JOSHUA FORBES.

MARSHFIELD.

THOMAS LITTLE,
JOHN EAMES,
JOSEPH WHITE,
JOHN BURROWS,
JOSEPH PHILLIPS,
SAMUEL BUMP,

JOHN LOW,

MORE———

JOHN BRANCE.

SANDWICH.

BENJAMIN NYE,
DAVID BERREY,
CALEB BLAKE,
JOB GIBBS,
STEPHEN WING.

BARNSTABLE.

LIEUT. FULLER,
JOHN LEWIS,
ELEAZER (Probably CLAPP),
SAMUEL LINNETT,
SAMUEL CHILDS,
SAMUEL BEREMAN.

YARMOUTH.

JOHN MATTHEWS,
JOHN GAGE,
WILLIAM GAGE,
HENRY GAGE,
HENRY GOLD, OR GOULD.

EASTHAM.

JOSEPH NESSEFIELD,
JOHN WALKER,
JOHN M———
JOHN FITTS, JR.,
JOHN MILLER, JR.

